Foundation For The Future

The New Tecumseth Experience*

Strategic Planning for Amalgamating Municipalities

A First Step

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* *New Tecumseth consists of the former municipalities of Alliston, Beeton, Tecumseth and Tottenham who amalgamated on January 1, 1991.*

93-00290/

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Ref. Our File No. _____

February 20, 1992

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE
STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR AMALGAMATING MUNICIPALITIES: A FIRST STEP

The Town of New Tecumseth was created as a result of an amalgamation on January 1, 1991 of four municipalities - Alliston, Beeton, Tecumseth and Tottenham. One of the first initiatives was to develop a Strategic Plan.

With all of the decisions it faced, Council decided to engage in the important first step of strategic planning as a means of establishing a vision and future direction for the Municipality. Now that the Strategic Plan is in place, New Tecumseth can proceed with other municipal plans and policies following the guidelines established in the Plan (e.g. the Official Plan).

In January, 1990, an Implementation Committee was created to deal with all of the work to be undertaken as a result of the amalgamation. It consisted of two elected officials from each of the four Municipalities. One of the Committee's first decisions was to appoint an Ad Hoc Planning Committee consisting of elected officials and citizens, to oversee the preparation of the Strategic Plan. The Committee worked extremely well and they are continuing to meet and to direct the preparation of New Tecumseth's Official Plan. Public involvement has been a critical component of the Town's strategic planning process and the Committee has involved residents, community groups and other interested individuals throughout the development of the Plan.

At the request of the Province of Ontario, we have prepared this manual to illustrate for other amalgamating Municipalities, the advantages and challenges of strategic planning. It contains a record of the New Tecumseth experience and provides suggestions for other amalgamating Municipalities interested in pursuing strategic planning.

Strategic planning has been an invaluable experience for New Tecumseth and has given us a solid direction on which to plan our future activities. The Town wishes to acknowledge the support and financial assistance provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. We encourage other amalgamating Municipalities to think of strategic planning as an important first step in planning for their new Municipality.

Yours Truly,

George K. McCague.

George McCague
Mayor

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I. — WHY NEW TECUMSETH BECAME INVOLVED IN STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning was not one of the first thoughts on the minds of the 22 elected officials who came together to form "The Amalgamated Town" on January 1, 1991. Faced with the daunting task of bringing together four independent municipalities, Council and staff were concerned about creating a municipal corporation that functioned properly. At the same time there was continuing pressure for new development and a growing cynicism on the part of concerned residents about the creation of the New Town and the future direction of the municipality.

How New Tecumseth was Created

The Town of the Amalgamated Municipalities of Alliston, Beeton, Tecumseth and Tottenham was created via Bill 177 of the Province of Ontario and was legally incorporated as a Town on January 1, 1991. Following the municipal election in November 1991, the municipality adopted a new name, the Corporation of the Town of New Tecumseth, effective January 1, 1992.

At the time of amalgamation, Alliston was the largest urban community in the area. It housed many of the new municipality's cultural and recreational facilities as well as prime retail and office space. Tottenham, a staunch defender of its community identity, resisted amalgamation until the Provincial decision was made. Tottenham residents and businesses wanted to see their community remain strong and independent. Beeton, a smaller municipality with pressure for residential growth on all sides saw amalgamation as a mixed blessing. It helped the municipality's financial situation, but was a perceived threat to its downtown and sense of history. Finally, Tecumseth, the vast rural municipality, was concerned that the views of urban residents from the other 3 former municipalities would overtake those of the rural former township residents.

The process of amalgamation was a difficult one. Four separate municipalities, each with a strong sense of identity and independence were merged into one. Each of the former municipalities wanted to retain its own

Exhibit 1

Characteristics of Amalgamating Municipalities

- Tremendous workload generated by the amalgamation
- Lack of common history or culture
- Data is at best inconsistent and often unavailable
- Different municipal administrative systems
- Different technical systems for computers and other office equipment
- Public cynicism, anger or apathy as a result of the amalgamation
- Political uncertainty and potential animosity
- Lack of consensus on priorities

sense of identity and the unique features and values that attracted its residents to the area. The characteristics of these amalgamating municipalities are summarized in Exhibit 1. We sense that most amalgamations undergo similar reactions and experiences.

In January 1990, one year prior to amalgamation, an Implementation Committee was created to develop some common policies and frameworks for conducting the municipality's business. The Committee saw the need to think about planning issues in March, and it created a Joint Planning Advisory Committee. Each Council appointed an elected official and selected a citizen to represent its municipality on the Committee. The Committee began to meet regularly to discuss planning policies and concerns. After amalgamation on January 1, 1991, the Committee's name was changed to The Ad Hoc Planning Committee and two additional citizen representatives were added to ensure that the public had a majority of votes on the Committee.

Deciding to Undertake a Strategic Plan

Like many areas in the shadow of the Greater Toronto Area, New Tecumseth was faced with tremendous development pressures. In fact, if all outstanding proposals were approved and constructed, the community's current population of 20,000 would virtually double . Not surprisingly, one of the first decisions of Council was to establish an Ad Hoc Planning Committee to oversee the preparation of an Official Plan for the new municipality. A new and approved Official Plan would provide a rational framework for development decisions.

The ten member Committee was carefully chosen to represent a full range of elected and citizen interests. There were four elected officials (one from each municipality) and six citizen representatives (selected to represent ratepayers, agricultural interests and the business community).

In thinking about the Official Plan and how best to approach it, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee, with assistance from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, began to think about developing a **strategic plan.** The Committee arranged for speakers to talk about their experiences as early as July 1990. There were too many questions to be answered first, before an Official Plan could be prepared.

- How much growth is desirable in New Tecumseth?
- What type of growth should we be promoting?
  - appropriate residential/commercial-industrial ratio
  - types of residential development
- Where should this growth be located?
- What service levels are appropriate?
- Should these service levels be the same in the urban and rural areas?

In short, the Committee had a number of questions that needed to be answered about the future direction of the new municipality. Answering these important questions was a necessary first step, after which the Official Plan could follow.

This approach to strategic planning was new and exciting. It allowed the Committee to think about creating a direction for New Tecumseth from which all other policies and plans would flow. Strategic planning offered a way to establish a framework as a first step in the process instead of being forced to practice planning after the fact.

Most municipalities do not have strategic plans and are constantly trying to make decisions among competing interests. Those that do, usually develop them after other plans and policies have been prepared. And, to our knowledge, no amalgamated municipalities in Ontario have undertaken a strategic planning exercise, and certainly not as their first main activity as a newly created municipality.

After further research and discussion, Council, in March 1991, authorized the Ad Hoc Planning Committee to proceed with a strategic plan. The Committee, with assistance from staff and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, prepared a Terms of Reference, interviewed consulting firms and hired Carolyn Kearns and Susan Wright of The Randolph Group as consultants to facilitate the process.

Who Should Read This Manual

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs has asked New Tecumseth to share its strategic planning experience with other amalgamating municipalities.

If you are an elected official, a staff member or a representative of a community or special interest group, this manual is designed to tell you what strategic planning is, how it works and why your amalgamated municipality should practice strategic planning and place a priority on it as one of your earliest initiatives. If you want further information on New Tecumseth's experience, please read on. If you want to ask specific questions about the process and its benefits, please call a member of The Ad Hoc Planning Committee, listed in Exhibit 2. Copies of New Tecumseth's strategic plan, *Foundation for the Future*, are available by calling the Town's planner, Stephen Naylor.

Exhibit 2

The Ad Hoc Planning Committee

	Area Code 705
MEMBERS	
Bob Cannon	(705) 435-4881
Helga Elie	(416) 729-2223
Ray Hunt	(416) 729-4338
Ralf Klopf (former Councillor)	(416) 729-2448
Iain Mackay (Chairman and former Councillor)	(416) 729-2621
Silvia Pedrazzi	(416) 936-4433
Richard Preiss	(416) 729-3198
Pat Russell (Councillor)	(416) 936-3379 (W) (416) 936-3294 (H)
Stuart Starbuck	(416) 936-2870
Aiden Whelan (Councillor)	(705) 435-6802

STAFF

Linda Duczak, former Chief Administrative Officer
Stephen Naylor, Planner
(705) 435-6219

CONSULTANTS

Carolyn Kearns, Susan Wright
The Randolph Group
(416) 368-7402

II — Questions About Strategic Planning And Its Value

At first, members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee were reluctant to pursue strategic planning. The Committee had a lot of internal discussions and met with others before asking Council to proceed with a strategic plan. Committee members attended workshops, talked to representatives from the Provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and organized a presentation by elected officials and staff from the City of Burlington to talk about the values of strategic planning.

Ten Most Often Asked Questions

Throughout their discussions, Committee members, Council and interested individuals asked the same types of questions. The questions are summarized in Exhibit 3 and answered on the following pages.

1. **What exactly is strategic planning?** At first, individuals were hesitant to ask such a "stupid" question. Eventually, it became clear that there is a real lack of understanding by many people about what strategic planning is and how it works for municipalities.

   - **A strategic plan provides a vision and strategies for the future.** It is both a top down process which is driven and directed by Council and a bottom up process which solicits the views of residents, businesses and other interest groups in the community.

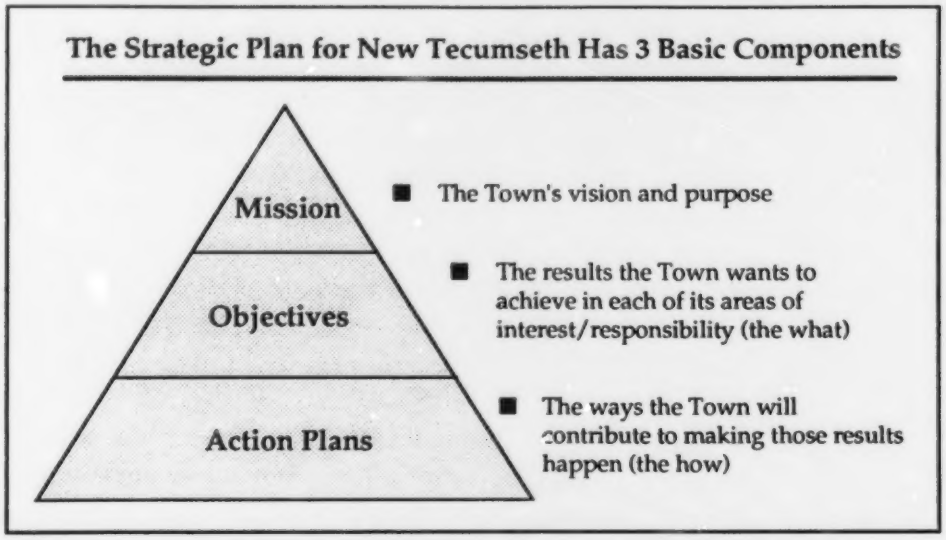
   - **Strategic planning is a road map** to guide the Town's direction and decision-making processes. It is a way to deal with problems and to recognize opportunities in a comprehensive manner.

   - **Strategic planning includes a specific set of strategies** for making the best use of our resources to achieve agreed upon objectives.

   The strategic plan for New Tecumseth has 3 basic components – a mission statement, a series of supporting objectives and specific action plans to implement these objectives.

Exhibit 3

10 Most Often Asked Questions About Strategic Planning	
1.	What exactly is strategic planning?
2.	How does it relate to the municipality's other plans, policies and processes?
3.	What is the legal status?
4.	How much does it cost?
5.	How long will it take?
6.	Who should be involved?
7.	How will the strategic plan be used?
8.	How does the plan get implemented?
9.	How often should the plan be reviewed?
10.	Will it make a difference to how the municipality operates?


The Strategic Plan for New Tecumseth Has 3 Basic Components
Mission
Objectives
Action Plans
The Town's vision and purpose
The results the Town wants to achieve in each of its areas of interest/responsibility (the what)
The ways the Town will contribute to making those results happen (the how)

2. **How does it relate to the municipality's other plans, policies and procedures?** Not only do people have trouble understanding what strategic planning is, they are unsure of its relationship to other municipal activities.

   Simply stated, a strategic plan is the umbrella plan from which all other plans and policies are derived. Ideally, land use plans and Official Plans, financial plans and budget setting, corporate plans and other plans and policies articulate and implement the overall mission, objectives and actions contained in the strategic plan.

   Strategic plans provide general guidelines which are then interpreted through the ongoing plans and activities of the municipality and its operating departments.

3. **What is its legal status?** Municipalities are well aware of the significance of Official Plans and the binding nature of these plans on Council decision-making. Council members in New Tecumseth and others asked about the legal status of strategic plans.

   Strategic plans are broad policy documents of Council. They establish a direction and guidelines for the municipality to follow and as such, communicate to residents, community groups and others on the values and vision of the municipality. To our knowledge, **strategic plans do not have legal status** in the way that say, Official Plans do. They may be

referred to in Ontario Municipal Board hearings but, to date, they have only been viewed as directional documents to guide Council. **Council is free to review and change its strategic plan if appropriate.** However, Council must be mindful of the public nature of the strategic plan and should not deviate from the plan without good reason.

4. **How much does it cost?** Municipalities are very concerned about costs of new initiatives, especially ones which are poorly understood or seen as not necessary. The costs of strategic planning came up regularly as a key concern of all involved.

Strategic plans can be completed for almost as little or as much money as is available. They do not have to be expensive to be good. A recent survey of 8 municipalities involved in strategic planning showed project costs ranging anywhere from $25,000 up to $250,000. A number of factors affect the cost:

- The process involved and the time allotted for the work (the general guideline is that the more time it takes, the more expensive it is)
- The amount and type of information available (the collection of new data is always more expensive than the use of existing data, if it is available)
- The public participation process (some forms of detailed surveying and attitude testing can be expensive)
- The use of staff/elected officials and outside consultants (a mixture is often the most cost effective way of developing a strategic plan).

New Tecumseth spent $68,000 on the hiring of a consultant to prepare its strategic plan. In addition there was the time spent by the Ad Hoc Planning Committee in the process leading up to the hiring of consultants and the meetings with them as part of the ongoing work program.

New Tecumseth's experience suggests that it is **perhaps more expensive to undertake strategic planning in amalgamating municipalities** as compared to already established municipalities.

More time is required to examine background documents, interview key interest groups and develop an acceptable strategic plan. In the case of New Tecumseth, there was a need to constantly consider 4 separate former municipalities and to ensure that all views and municipal documents were heard, read and reflected in the final strategic plan.

5. **How long will it take?** New Tecumseth was originally concerned that strategic planning would take too long, given the interest and need in completing other studies such as the Official Plan. However, during the process, it became clear that strategic planning was an important first step which would set the direction for all other municipal projects.

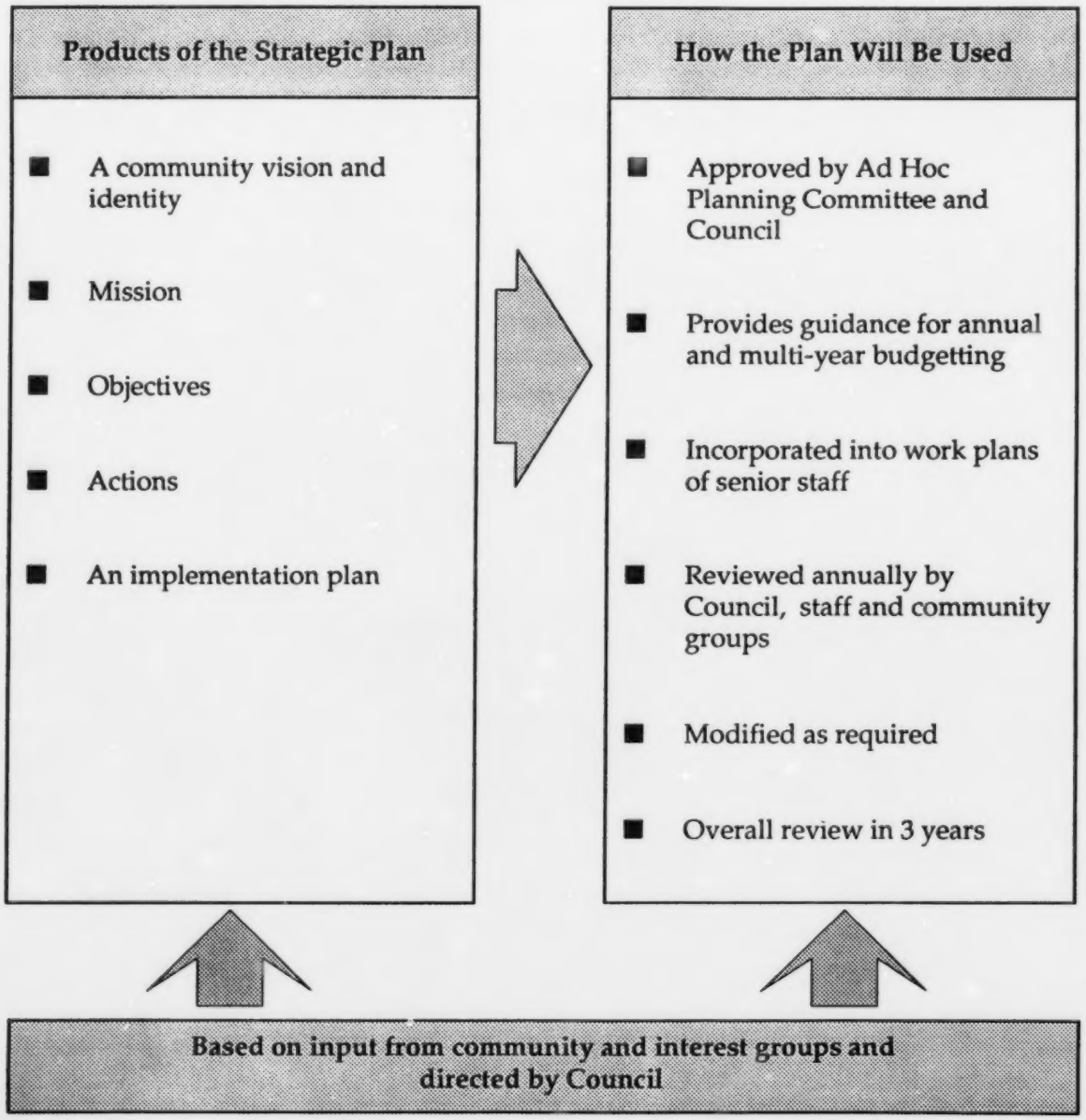
   A good strategic plan does not need to take a long time to prepare. New Tecumseth had an approved plan within 7 months of hiring a consultant to facilitate the process. The plan could have been sent to Council for approval earlier, except for the municipal election (which reduced the Council from 22 to 9 elected members). In fact, strategic plans should be completed within a 6 – 9 month timeframe to ensure that everyone involved sees that the plan is an important component of Council's activities.

6. **Who should be involved?** Municipalities often ask who should be involved in the preparation of the strategic plan. Council members usually feel that their other municipal responsibilities make it impossible for them to take on this additional responsibility. Staff often feel the same way. There is concern about hiring consultants as they are considered expensive and not always sensitive to the municipal situation.

   To be successful, a strategic plan must involve everyone in the municipality. The plan requires Council commitment and involvement from the beginning of the process. At the same time, staff will be responsible for implementing the action plans contained in the strategic plan and must support it. Citizens, community groups and other special interest groups must also know about the plan and be involved in its development.

   It is critical that the plan be authored and owned by the municipality. Consultants are useful facilitators for the work but they should not

Exhibit 4
How Will The Strategic Plan Be Used?


Products of the Strategic Plan
A community vision and identity
Mission
Objectives
Actions
An implementation plan
How the Plan Will Be Used
Approved by Ad Hoc Planning Committee and Council
Provides guidance for annual and multi-year budgetting
Incorporated into work plans of senior staff
Reviewed annually by Council, staff and community groups
Modified as required
Overall review in 3 years
Based on input from community and interest groups and directed by Council

assume total responsibility for the strategic plan preparation. Council and often its designated Committee dealing with the plan, must be familiar and comfortable with the contents and wording of the strategic plan document and must be prepared to explain it to members of the public and other groups.

7. **How will the strategic plan be used?** There is a common feeling that strategic planning is an extra, or not really a part of the municipality's ongoing business. Nothing could be further from the truth.

   Good strategic plans have specific products which provide direction and will become part of the municipality's way of doing business. The products of New Tecumseth's strategic plan, *Foundation for the Future,* and an outline of how the plan will be used is shown in Exhibit 4.

8. **How does the plan get implemented?** In addition to wondering about the usefulness of strategic planning, municipalities regularly ask about how strategic plans get adopted and approved by a municipal Council. The process is really very simple.

   New Tecumseth adopted its strategic plan by a resolution of Council. The motion before Council briefly described the process and content of the strategic plan and was approved by a vote of Council. The actual resolution is contained in the beginning section of the plan, *Foundation for the Future.*

   New Tecumseth will also prepare an annual implementation report showing the progress that has been made in implementing the objectives and actions contained in *Foundation for the Future.*

9. **How often should the plan be reviewed?** Because strategic planning is relatively new to municipalities, there has not been a lot of attention spent on reviewing the plan once it has received Council approval. There are questions about the plan's timeframe and its flexibility. In New Tecumseth, Council questioned whether all objectives and action plans once approved, must be rigidly adhered to and implemented. Council in New Tecumseth, wanted to ensure that it could change parts of the strategic plan if community needs changed.

It is important to emphasize that strategic planning is a dynamic process. It must be constantly reviewed to ensure that it continues to reflect the vision and direction of the community. In New Tecumseth, Council has committed to review *Foundation for the Future,* annually prior to the budgeting process. As part of its review, Council will establish priorities for the coming year. **Council is committed to updating the plan on a regular basis** and will undertake a review prior to the end of the term of Council. This review will include detailed consultation with the public. These reviews are important to ensure that the plan remains relevant to the needs of the municipality and to modify its objectives and activities to provide a future oriented focus.

10. **Will it make a difference to how the municipality operates?**
Municipalities have many responsibilities and the list of activities and the costs involved increase annually. Councils are most interested in undertaking initiatives which are their legal responsibility or where they will see real value for the time and dollars spent.

Good strategic planning has proven itself to save time and money in operating a municipality. In New Tecumseth, the process was invaluable and provided an important first step in setting the Town's direction. Some of the benefits experienced by New Tecumseth's strategic planning process are outlined below:

- Strategic planning provides a vehicle for taking an important first step in developing a collective vision
  - the Ad Hoc Planning Committee started thinking like a Town without referring to the former municipal boundaries

- Strategic planning establishes a process for setting collective priorities
  - process allowed contentious issues to be discussed as part a broader overall strategy

- Strategic planning provides a framework for decision-making
  - municipal plans, policies and budgets all flow from the strategic plan

- Strategic planning creates a mechanism for positive public discussion

- focuses on broad direction setting for the future (as opposed to negative amalgamation issues)

In summary, all municipalities and especially amalgamating municipalities benefit from strategic planning. More than any other single initiative, strategic planning enables decision-makers to be proactive, to anticipate issues and to develop policies and programs to meet community needs. It reduces the confusion, conflict and indecision experienced by many groups involved in municipal government today.

As an amalgamating municipality, you have probably asked many of these same questions about strategic planning and its value to your municipality. The New Tecumseth experience is a strong confirmation that the process works. The community and Council found that, once they moved beyond the amalgamation focus, they had many common views and concerns. Rural and urban residents shared the same vision for the future of their municipality, and had many of the same opinions about how best to achieve this vision. Perhaps most importantly, the community began to discuss the actions needed to implement this vision.

III — THE NEW TECUMSETH EXPERIENCE: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN

The Ad Hoc Committee met for a long time prior to embarking on a strategic plan. In fact, members of the Committee estimate that they met monthly for approximately one year before the Committee proceeded with the preparation of a strategic plan.

Deciding to Proceed With a Strategic Plan

New Tecumseth was unfamiliar with the concept of working as a single municipality. Prior to January 1, 1991, there had been 4 strong and independent communities, each with its own municipal government and set of responsibilities. Even though everyone knew that amalgamation was coming, working together as one municipality was a real challenge. The municipality made some important decisions to assist it in beginning to think as a single entity.

- **Appointed an Ad Hoc Planning Committee.** One of the new Council's first decisions was to reestablish a Committee of elected officials and citizens to continue to address the issue of planning for the new municipality. The Joint Planning Committee was officially renamed The Ad Hoc Planning Advisory Committee. As mentioned earlier, the 10 member Committee provided a good balance with 4 elected representatives (one from each of the former municipalities) and 6 citizens (the majority of whom represented community, business and agricultural interests in the area). The Committee met at least once a month to address the planning challenges faced by New Tecumseth.

- **Established principles, goals and objectives** for a new Official Plan. The Ad Hoc Committee continued the work of the former Joint Planning Committee and its efforts to develop some common goals and objectives. These draft policies were the result of much discussion about the type of municipality individuals wanted to live and work in, and provided a useful outline of the emerging values.

- **Sought out information about strategic planning.** It became increasingly evident to the Committee that dealing with issues of growth and development in the municipality was difficult without some broader understanding of where the municipality wanted to be in the future and the type of community it wanted to become. Members of the Committee began to talk to staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs about strategic planning. They attended workshops and asked other municipalities who had undertaken strategic planning to discuss its value.

After focussing on specific growth and development policies for New Tecumseth, members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee realized that they needed to develop a strategic plan. Council authorized the Committee to explore the options available.

Developing A Strategic Plan For New Tecumseth: The Schedule

The following pages document New Tecumseth's experience with strategic planning. The experience is positive and the results are a strong strategic plan which is firmly supported by Council and the community. The Committee worked hard to ensure that the plan was a good one.

Exhibit 5 chronicles the New Tecumseth experience. It provides a record on how the process worked, the length of time it took from the decision to hire a consultant/facilitator in the spring of 1991 to Council approval of the plan on December 17, 1991. It is a good model for other amalgamating municipalities to follow.

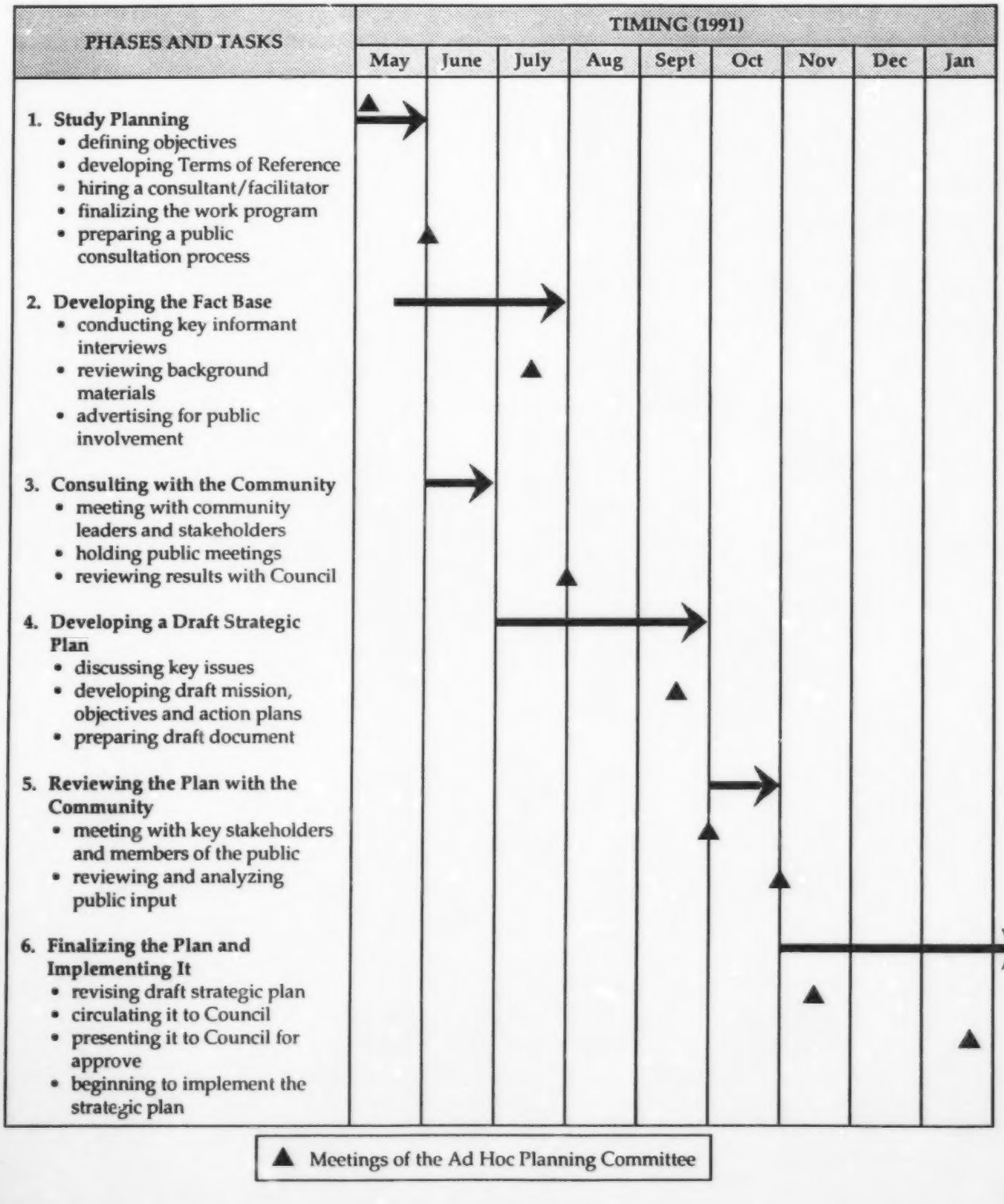
1. Study Planning

The Ad Hoc Planning Committee spent a long time thinking about the strategic plan and how it should be developed.

- **Prepared a 10 page document listing principles, goals and objectives for the municipality.** Even though this work was originally designed for the preparation of an Official Plan, it proved invaluable to the preparation of strategic objectives and action plans.

Exhibit 5

New Tecumseth's Strategic Plan Schedule


PHASES AND TASKS
TIMING (1991)
May
June
July
Aug
Sept
Oct
Nov
Dec
Jan
1. Study Planning
• defining objectives
• developing Terms of Reference
• hiring a consultant/facilitator
• finalizing the work program
• preparing a public consultation process
2. Developing the Fact Base
• conducting key informant interviews
• reviewing background materials
• advertising for public involvement
3. Consulting with the Community
• meeting with community leaders and stakeholders
• holding public meetings
• reviewing results with Council
4. Developing a Draft Strategic Plan
• discussing key issues
• developing draft mission, objectives and action plans
• preparing draft document
5. Reviewing the Plan with the Community
• meeting with key stakeholders and members of the public
• reviewing and analyzing public input
6. Finalizing the Plan and Implementing It
• revising draft strategic plan
• circulating it to Council
• presenting it to Council for approve
• beginning to implement the strategic plan
▲ Meetings of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee

- **Developed a Terms of Reference.** With the help of staff from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Committee produced a comprehensive Terms of Reference containing the information they wanted to see included in a strategic plan.
  - introduction explaining the background leading up to the study
  - the strategic planning process to be followed (environmental scan, definition of community vision, formulation of strategic issue action plans, public review and Council approval and plan implementation)
  - timing of the study
  - study management
  - project requirements in terms of the consultant's proposals

- **Hired a consultant/facilitator.** The Committee received a number of proposals and interviewed a short list of consultants to discuss the project. The Committee made it clear that it wanted to be involved in all aspects of the strategic plan and that it wanted a consultant who would feel comfortable assisting the Committee in developing a strategic plan. The Committee also specified that public participation was to be an integral part of the entire strategic planning process.

- **Finalizing the work program**. Once a consulting firm was hired, members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee met with the consultants to discuss the work program in detail. Questions were asked about how data was to be collected, who was to be interviewed and the types of data to be collected as part of the project. The consultants were instructed to return to the next meeting with a clear proposal for involving the public. Right from the start of the process, the Committee members demonstrated that they were in charge of the process and that they expected results.

- **Preparing a public participation process.** The second meeting with the consultants involved a detailed discussion of how best to involve the public. The Committee decided on 3 main ways to involve various interest groups.

  - **A one page questionnaire was mailed to every household** as part of the tax mailing, asking for comments about community values, concerns and desires for the future. A copy of the

Exhibit 6

Strategic Planning Questionnaire Mailed To All Taxpayers

1. What do you value most about your community?

   .....

   .....

2. What are your top three concerns about you community today?

   a) .....
   b) .....
   c) .....

3. What kind of community do you want to live in in the future?

   .....

   .....

4. Where do you live?

   In one of the urban areas (please specify) .....
   In the rural area (please specify where) .....

5. If you work, where do you work? .....

   Inside the New Town .....
   Outside the New Town (please specify where) .....

   .....

6. How long have you lived in the area? ..... years

7. Do you belong to any groups in the community?

   ..... No .... Yes
   Please tell us which one(s) .....

   .....

8. Would you be interested in attending a meeting about the development of a strategic plan for the New Town?

   ..... No .... Yes
   If yes, please provide your name, address and telephone number in the space below.

   .....

   .....

   .....

questionnaire is provided in Exhibit 6. An extensive mailing list was developed based on responses received from the returns.

- **Community stakeholder workshops** were held during the afternoon and evening and involved individuals representing a variety of groups. Over 100 individuals were invited to attend these structured sessions and to participate in a discussion of strategic planning.

- **Public meetings,** again were held in the afternoon and evening to hear comments about the vision and direction desired by Town residents and business interests.

Throughout the process, Council was kept informed of the process and invited to attend all of the stakeholder and public meetings.

The first part of the work was completed over about a 4 week period. There was lots of discussion about the strategic plan and posters were displayed in municipal buildings and stores encouraging people to get involved.

2. Developing the Fact Base

One of the toughest parts of the work was finding comprehensive data for New Tecumseth. In some cases, the Committee had to rely on pieces of information from different municipal and Provincial documents. For example, there was no comprehensive data on population and employment, either in terms of current data or future projections. The best information related to planning statistics. Regular updates were available on development applications and numbers of residential and industrial/commercial units in various stages of the approval process.

The lack of comprehensive up-to-date data was in no way the fault of New Tecumseth. The latest available census material was in 1986, well before amalgamation of the 4 municipalities occurred. Other information, for example housing studies and culture and recreation master plans had been prepared recently, but again prior to amalgamation.

Developing the fact base became as much a case of documenting what was unavailable as it was a case of examining trends and other data. However, it also encouraged the Committee to think about the type of information it would need for the preparation of other municipal plans and policies. Much of this information was then requested through various action statements contained in the strategic plan.

In developing the fact base, the consultants and members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee met regularly with individuals and groups in the area. These meetings provided further opportunities to advertise the strategic planning process and to encourage people to complete questionnaires and attend meetings to provide their views.

3. Consulting with the Community

Throughout New Tecumseth's strategic planning process, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee regularly reviewed its plans for involving the public. In total over 350 individuals (many representing organizations) provided input into the strategic planning process. The Committee's philosophy was "there is no such thing as too much public involvement"

The consultation process occurred at two key stages in the planning process.

- **Prior to the preparation of the strategic plan.** Early on in the process, Council, community interest groups and the public were invited to participate in the study. The questionnaire (over 175 were returned with detailed comments to the Committee) provided virtually all residents with an opportunity to get involved if they wished.

  The stakeholder workshops were organized as working sessions where participants were divided into smaller groups and asked to think about the values of the municipality and to develop an approach to dealing with important issue areas such as the environment, housing, culture, transportation, urban and rural areas, agriculture and others.

The public meetings explained what strategic planning means and outlined the process for New Tecumseth. Again those in attendance were asked to comment on their values and concerns about the future of New Tecumseth. Like the stakeholders, individuals attending the public meetings were asked to provide their views on various important issue areas.

- **Following the preparation of the draft plan.** Another round of public consultation followed the preparation of the draft strategic plan. Again, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee tried to ensure that all those who had expressed an interest in the strategic plan knew that a draft was available for review and comment.

  Everyone who returned a questionnaire and included their address was mailed a letter advising them that a draft of the strategic plan was available at all 3 local libraries and in the municipal buildings.

  All stakeholders (those representing organizations or special interests in the area) were personally delivered copies of the draft strategic plan for comment by their group.

  Again, public meetings were organized and advertised. The draft plan was discussed in detail at these meetings and comments recorded for later discussion by the Ad Hoc Planning Committee.

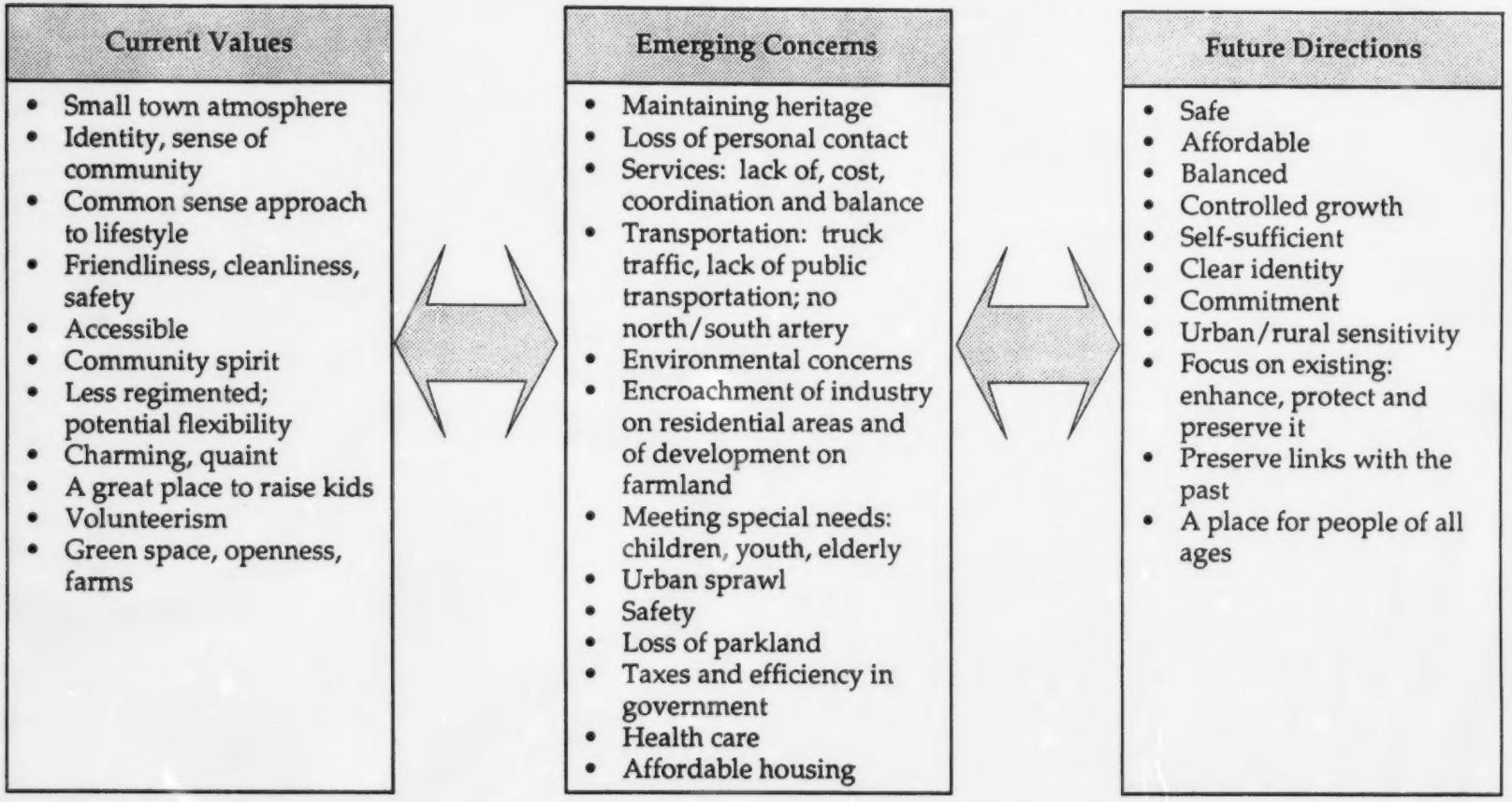
Throughout the public consultation process, members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee met with individuals and recorded comments and concerns. All Committee members provided their telephone numbers on advertisements and in written communications and encouraged individuals to call and to get involved. And the Ad Hoc Planning Committee kept Council informed of its activities and organized a presentation to discuss the results of the public participation process.

4. Developing a Draft Strategic Plan

Based on the review of background information, the analysis of returned questionnaires and feedback during and following the public and stakeholder meetings, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee began to

Exhibit 7

Strong Views Existed On Values and The Future Direction For The New Town


Current Values
• Small town atmosphere
• Identity, sense of community
• Common sense approach to lifestyle
• Friendliness, cleanliness, safety
• Accessible
• Community spirit
• Less regimented; potential flexibility
• Charming, quaint
• A great place to raise kids
• Volunteerism
• Green space, openness, farms
Emerging Concerns
• Maintaining heritage
• Loss of personal contact
• Services: lack of, cost, coordination and balance
• Transportation: truck traffic, lack of public transportation; no north/south artery
• Environmental concerns
• Encroachment of industry on residential areas and of development on farmland
• Meeting special needs: children, youth, elderly
• Urban sprawl
• Safety
• Loss of parkland
• Taxes and efficiency in government
• Health care
• Affordable housing
Future Directions
• Safe
• Affordable
• Balanced
• Controlled growth
• Self-sufficient
• Clear identity
• Commitment
• Urban/rural sensitivity
• Focus on existing: enhance, protect and preserve it
• Preserve links with the past
• A place for people of all ages

develop a draft strategic plan. The process involved the following general activities:

- **Discussing emerging issues.** The Committee became aware of several important themes emerging from all of the background work.

  - Controlling and managing growth, by establishing criteria for development and enhancing what is already valued in the community

  - Providing needed infrastructure for both hard and soft services

  - Meeting community needs in terms of housing, shopping, recreation facilities/programs, etc.

  - Developing a strong local government which is organized to deliver municipal services in as efficient and effective a way as possible.

  The current values, emerging concerns and future directions expressed by residents, businesses and other interest groups in New Tecumseth are summarized in Exhibit 7.

- **Developing a draft mission, objectives and action plans.** The overriding feeling in New Tecumseth is that people are living there by choice. They fiercely value the rural and small town quality of life and want to see this culture and heritage preserved.

  However, these people are pragmatists and realize that growth is inevitable. They also see growth as a means of paying for the full range of services required in a modern day municipality. More than anything else, people were asking for a balanced and controlled approach to growth which is rationale, incremental and fiscally responsible.

  The community strongly supported the preparation of a strategic plan and an official plan which reflected these values and wanted them to be implemented by a Council of community leaders.

Exhibit 8
New Tecumseth's Mission and Objectives

Mission Statement

Our mission is to maintain a pleasant, small town environment that allows for a mix of rural, agricultural and urban interests to continue and to thrive.

Objectives

The Town of New Tecumseth will achieve this mission through the following objectives.

Controlling Growth and Development. To preserve and enhance the unique rural and small town character of the community, while accommodating controlled growth so that we can sustain and develop the services the community needs

Enhancing Our Economic Viability. To develop a healthy, diversified local economy so that the community provides local employment opportunities, a balanced tax base, healthy downtown cores and strong existing commercial developments

Ensuring a Clean, Healthy Environment. To preserve and enhance unique natural features and environmentally significant resources, and to promote environmentally sensitive, responsible practices and development

Ensuring Safety and Protection. To ensure that the people have a community in which they feel safe and secure

Improving Mobility and Accessibility. To promote the development of a transportation system that supports the safe and efficient movement of community residents and businesses and minimizes disruption to communities and the environment

Preserving Our Community Heritage. To foster a community identity which recognizes and builds upon its strong and unique characteristics

Providing Effective Governance and Administration. To develop a sound, cost-conscious, accountable administrative and governance system which is responsive to and communicates effectively with its citizens

Providing Leisure Opportunities. To promote the provision of a diversity of cultural activities and active and passive recreational opportunities which reflect the range of lifestyle interests, ages and states of health and mobility of community residents

Supporting People Services. To recognize the social, housing, educational and health needs of the variety of residents in the community and to work pro-actively with others to ensure an effective community network of services

Recognizing these views, the Ad Hoc Committee had several meetings to discuss the strategic plan document. Specifically, the Committee, with the help of its consultants, developed a draft mission statement, objectives and action plans which would form the basis of the strategic plan. The mission and supporting objectives are shown in Exhibit 8.

The plan was discussed with senior staff to ensure that the action statements were feasible and capable of implementation by the Town of New Tecumseth.

5. Reviewing the Plan with the Community

Once the draft plan was approved by the Ad Hoc Planning Committee, it was circulated to Council members and those stakeholders who had attended the earlier workshop and expressed interest in the project.

All citizens who had completed a questionnaire and provided their address were sent a letter advising them that the draft plan was available for review in the 3 public libraries and in the municipal buildings. They were also advised of the public meeting dates to discuss the draft document.

As in the earlier public meetings, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee ran the final set of public meetings and answered questions from the floor. The consultants made a brief presentation prior to the question and answer period. Specific comments were noted for later discussion by members of the Committee.

The experience was a rewarding one. Without question, the majority of people attending the meetings praised the process and the product. Their prime concern was to ensure that the strategic plan was adopted by Council, implemented and used as the basis for all decision-making in New Tecumseth. These comments were especially important as the meetings were held in October, just prior to the municipal election in November. Many candidates running for office attended the meetings and heard these comments.

6. Finalizing the Plan and Implementing It

Following the public meetings the Ad Hoc Committee met to review the comments made and to read briefs submitted by several citizens. Changes were discussed and made as a result of the comments received. For example, a glossary of terms was added to the document, explaining various terms used in the plan. Clarifications were made to the sections dealing with growth and development and with economic development.

Once the plan was finalized it was submitted to Council just prior to the election. Council accepted the report and referred it to the incoming Council for their approval.

On December 17th, 1991 with many Committee members in attendance, Council listened to a presentation on the strategic plan and asked questions of members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee and the consultants. A motion was made by a Council member who was also a member of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee and the plan was voted on and approved.

Since the adoption of the strategic plan, Council and senior staff have been meeting to develop specific action plans to implement various sections of the plan. Department heads have been meeting to assign priorities to the action statements, responsibilities for completing the work and the relative costs involved. The strategic plan has been referred to and discussed in a variety of staff reports. Already, the document is being cited in efforts to establish an economic development initiative for the Town's ongoing work.

The preparation of the strategic plan took approximately 7 months from the time that the Ad Hoc Planning Committee hired a consultant until the time that Council approved the plan. The process was time consuming for all involved, but extremely rewarding.

IV — Advice For Amalgamating Municipalities

Members of the Ad Hoc Planning Committee and Council are pleased with the Town's strategic plan. It provided a vehicle for all interests in New Tecumseth to come forward and express their views on the future of the municipality. It has provided a positive framework to plan for change and a new direction.

Reasons to Consider Strategic Planning

New Tecumseth's experience is proof that strategic planning is a "must" for amalgamating municipalities. There are three main reasons for amalgamating municipalities to pursue strategic planning at an early stage in the new municipality's formation.

- **Opportunity to start fresh and dream about the future.** Strategic planning enables Council, residents and other interest groups to develop a vision on the type of municipality individuals want and the direction needed to get there.

- **Positive way to involve residents, businesses and community interests.** Amalgamation by its nature is often negative and disruptive to the way communities are used to operating. Strategic planning provides an opportunity to involve a broad range of interests in a general discussion of future direction. Individuals can work together to develop a vision and objectives for the future without focussing on issue-specific concerns. In New Tecumseth, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee was pleased with the amount and type of public input it received.

- **Strategic planning is the beginning of an ongoing process.** Unlike some other municipal activities, strategic planning is broad and general as opposed to narrow and specific. Good strategic planning develops a framework from which other municipal plans and policies follow. It provides a rational approach to municipal decision-making which is used on a regular basis.

Exhibit 9
Do's And Don'ts Of The Strategic Planning Process

Amalgamating municipalities should ...

- ✔ Make strategic planning your first municipal priority
- ✔ Appoint a Committee to oversee the strategic plan preparation
  - Ensure equal representation of all former municipalities
  - Involve key interest groups, including critics
- ✔ Establish a clear role and reporting process with Council
- ✔ Develop an ambitious but realistic schedule
- ✔ Make public participation a key focus of the process
- ✔ Ensure that senior staff are involved in a meaningful way

Amalgamating municipalities should not ...

- ✘ Wait for data that does not exist
- ✘ Get sidetracked on non-strategic issues
- ✘ Push the process along at the expense of discussion
- ✘ Forget the plan once it has been adopted by Council

For all of these reasons, and others, amalgamating municipalities should embrace strategic planning as one of their first municipal responsibilities.

Do's and Don'ts of Strategic Planning

As the first amalgamating municipality in Ontario to attempt strategic planning, New Tecumseth learned the process by trial and error. The Town's experience points to some definite "must dos" and areas to avoid. They are summarized in Exhibit 9.

New Tecumseth's experience with strategic planning suggests that there are several critical components which must exist if the plan is to be successful. Make sure that you incorporate these components into any strategic planning process you design.

- **Make strategic planning your first municipal priority.** Amalgamating municipalities need to commit early on to strategic planning and they need to communicate this commitment to all interests in the municipality. New Tecumseth found that it took some time to actually make the decision to proceed with a strategic plan, but once the decision was taken, there was wide publicity of the process and invitations for people to get involved.

- **Appoint a Committee to oversee the strategic plan preparation.** New Tecumseth found that strategic planning was just one of many initiatives on the go in the newly created municipality. Council, with 22 members, was too big and too busy to take on strategic planning as a Council activity. Council appointed the Ad Hoc Planning Committee to assume responsibility for the exercise.

  In establishing a Committee, it is extremely important to ensure that the major interest groups are equally represented. For example, in New Tecumseth, each of the four former municipalities was assigned one Council representative. The balance of the Committee was made up of six citizens representing a diverse range of business, agriculture, and community interests. Some of these citizen representatives were harsh critics of the way business had been done in the past.

- **Establish a clear role and reporting process with Council.** It is critical that Council, although not involved in the day-to-day activities of the strategic plan, feel properly involved in the process. Striking this balance can be difficult where there is an interim Council (in New Tecumseth's case, it was also a very large one), and a heavy agenda of business. Nevertheless, the Committee and Council must develop an agreed upon process for keeping Council involved in the strategic plan.

  In New Tecumseth, Committee members who sat on Council regularly reported on the strategic planning progress. Council had two separate presentations of the plan at key stages in its development, and were personally invited to all stakeholder and public meetings. Council members received copies of the draft plan for comment, in advance of the document being circulated to the public and certainly before it was finalized. In this way, Council members always knew what was occurring in advance of the public.

- **Develop an ambitious but realistic schedule.** Strategic planning suffers from an incorrect reputation of being "airy fairy" and irrelevant to the ongoing operations of the municipality. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is a need to commit to an aggressive schedule for completion of the plan. An ambitious schedule reinforces the fact that the strategic plan should drive other plans and decisions. In New Tecumseth, the process took seven months from the time the consultant was hired to the time Council approved the plan in December. This timeframe was affected by the municipal election that occurred towards the end of the process. It does not include the time taken to finalize the final draft following approval by Council in December,1991.

- **Make public participation a key focus of the process.** New Tecumseth felt that public involvement in the preparation of its strategic plan was most important. Numerous opportunities were offered to become involved in the process. Advertisements, personal mailings, questionnaires, public meetings, workshops and individual interviews were all part of the public participation process. Unlike controversial issue-based projects, strategic planning is broad and visionary. Individuals who got involved in the process commented on the positive nature of the work.

- **Ensure that senior staff are involved in a meaningful way.** To be successful, strategic plans must be implemented. While Council

approves a strategic plan, staff are the ones who implement it. Therefore, it is critical for senior staff to understand the rationale behind the strategic plan and to comment on the feasibility of implementing the actions contained in the plan, prior to its adoption.

In New Tecumseth, senior staff had three meetings to discuss the strategic plan. At one meeting staff discussed the public participation results and the draft mission statement and supporting objectives. A second meeting was held to review the draft action plans to ensure that they were feasible. These action plans were discussed with senior staff prior to being finalized by the Ad Hoc Planning Committee. A final meeting was held with senior staff prior to the adoption of the plan by Council to discuss implementation of the plan. By the end of the project, staff felt involved and committed to the strategic plan, *Foundation for the Future*.

The New Tecumseth experience also pointed out problem areas or difficulties to be avoided.

- **Do not wait for data that does not exist.** Traditional strategic plans are based on a careful analysis of the existing municipal situation--trends in population and employment growth, financial health and projections for the future demand on services. Much of this information was unavailable in New Tecumseth. As four municipalities joined together, old data was often not useful. Boundary changes meant that at times the data was inaccurate for the new municipality. The new municipality was not just "the sum of" the 4 previous municipalities. Instead of waiting to develop new data, New Tecumseth relied on the information that was available and extensive interviews. The resulting strategic plan has not suffered from the lack of published data.

- **Do not get sidetracked on non-strategic issues.** In strategic planning, there is a constant temptation to get drawn into issue-based discussions or rationalizations for recent decisions. This temptation is particularly strong in newly created municipalities that have come together as a result of amalgamation. In New Tecumseth, the Ad Hoc Planning Committee continually explained the strategic planning process to people and encouraged them to comment on the future direction and vision for the municipality. By the end of the process everyone was comfortable discussing these broader strategic areas.

- **Do not push the process along at the expense of discussion.** Although it is important to develop an aggressive study schedule, strategic planning cannot be "rammed through" Council. All involved parties must feel that they have had an opportunity to be involved in the process and to ensure that their comments have been at least understood, if not incorporated into the final plan.

  The Ad Hoc Planning Committee debated finalizing the plan prior to the election and decided, wisely, to wait and let the new Council review the strategic plan and approve it. In this way, the Council that approved the plan, is committed to its implementation.

- **Do not forget the plan once it has been adopted by Council.** Strategic plans once adopted by Council need to be implemented. This requires work on the part of Council, staff and key interest groups. In New Tecumseth, the municipality has prepared an implementation plan for. *Foundation for the Future* and is in the process of carrying it out.

This report was sponsored by the Program Services Branch of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. It was written by Carolyn Kearns and Susan Wright of The Randolph Group under the direction of members of The Ad Hoc Planning Committee.

If you are interested in receiving a copy of *Foundation For The Future,* please contact New Tecumseth's planner, Stephen Naylor at the Town's offices (705) 435-6219. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs is actively encouraging municipalities to carry out strategic planning. Information on Ministry programs is available from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Program Services Branch (416) 585-6244 or your Regional Office of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.